

# Soil Screening: Sample Collection Instructions (H-399)



## 1. Gather your supplies:

- ☐ Digging tool such as a trowel or shovel.
- ☐ Garden gloves to protect your hands.
- ☐ A clean plastic bucket or tray to put all soil samples in.
- ☐ Tray for mixing together the samples you collected.
- ☐ Clean, plastic zippered bag labeled with your
  - name,
  - address, and
  - date you collected the samples.



## 2. Choose garden.

Choose which garden to test. More than one garden can be tested, but make sure to sample each garden separately and label clearly.

Pick several random places in your garden to sample. For small gardens, take 2 or 3 samples; for larger gardens take 4 or 5 samples.

- Use dry soil, not muddy.



## 3. Dig down 6 inches in several spots.

- Remove surface plants or mulch.
- Use a shovel or trowel to take the samples at 6 inches deep. This is the depth at which most of the plant roots will grow.
- Take at least one scoop for each 25 square feet (5 ft. x 5 ft. section) of garden area to have a good sample for the laboratory tests.
- Place all scoops in a clean plastic bucket.
- Take samples from several locations.



## 4. Mix well.

Mix together all of the soil samples in the plastic bucket.

## 5. Put 3 cups of soil in the plastic bag labeled clearly with your name and address.

Place 3 cups\* of the mixed soil in a re-sealable gallon size (approx. 10" x 11") zipper plastic storage bag labeled with your name, address, and date. **DO NOT use paper/brown bags, grocery bags or other containers.** (Please note, samples less than 3 cups in volume or that appear to contain mulch, surface vegetation, animal droppings, other foreign materials or have a sludge-like texture are NOT acceptable and will be rejected.) \*See photo #6 for fill line.



## 6. Seal the bag.

Follow the drop-off instructions on the next page and deliver sample/s in person to the City of Milwaukee Health Department.

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# Soil Screening: Drop-Off Instructions

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**NOTE: You must pay for the soil testing when you drop off your sample(s).** You can pay with cash, credit card, or a check made out to **City of Milwaukee Health Department Laboratory**. The cost is \$15 for nutrient analysis and \$10 for lead screening for EACH bagged sample.

Fill out the **Soil Sample Information & Screening Request Form (H-401)**. This form must be completed and submitted along with your samples. You can complete it at home and bring it with you, or you can fill out a copy at the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD).

**Make sure you have completed these steps before taking your samples to the Health Department:**

- ☐ Filled out all paperwork
- ☐ Collected at least 3 cups of soil in a labeled, gallon-size zippered storage bag
- ☐ Have payment ready (cash, credit card, or check)

Take samples to the MHD Consumer Protection Customer Service Desk:

Frank P. Zeidler Municipal Building  
841 North Broadway  
3rd Floor  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Or mail your sample, paperwork and payment to:

MHD Laboratory  
841 North Broadway  
2nd Floor  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Please note, if you do not follow the sampling instructions exactly as indicated on the preceding page, MHD reserves the right to reject your samples.

## Questions?

Please call the MHD Laboratory at

**(414) 286-3526**